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A NEW SNAKE FROM ARABIA

BY KARL P. SCHMIDT
ASSISTANT CURATOR OF AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

A small collection of lizards and snakes made by Mr. A. R. M. Rickards, of Aden, southern Arabia, in the Aden area in 1932 has been presented to Field Museum by Mr. Henry Field, whose enthusiastic interest in southwestern Asia has already brought several other accessions of zoological specimens from this general region. The interesting south Arabian reptilian fauna has not previously been represented in Field Museum's collections. That our knowledge of the reptilian fauna of this part of the world is still far from complete is well shown by the numerous new forms described in recent papers, by Mr. H. W. Parker on collections from southeastern Arabia, and by Mr. G. Scortecci on reptiles from Yemen. It is nevertheless surprising that Mr. Rickard's collection contains a new species of snake, referable to the genus *Rhynchocalamus*, which has hitherto been known only from *R. melanocephalus* in northwestern Arabia, Palestine, Syria, and Lower Egypt. The description of this new form follows:

Rhynchocalamus arabicus sp. nov.

Type from Aden, Arabia. No. 18,219 Field Museum of Natural History. Female. Collected 1932 by A. R. M. Rickards.

Diagnosis.—Closely allied to *Rhynchocalamus melanocephalus* (Jan), with which it agrees in its reduced maxillary dentition and greatly elongate posterior solid fang, and from which it is distinguished by its uniform dark color, much wider frontal shield, and higher number of ventral plates and subcaudals.

Description of type.—Body elongate, slender; head only slightly distinct from neck; ventrals distinctly angulate; pupil round; rostral slightly offset from the adjacent scales, extending backward on the upper surface of the head nearly halfway to the frontal; internasal suture half as long as that between the prefrontals; frontal proportionately very wide, nearly as wide as long, about as long as its

distance from the tip of the snout; supraoculars narrow, narrower anteriorly than posteriorly; parietals large; nasal undivided; a subquadrate loreal slightly longer than high; one preocular and one postocular; temporals 1–1 on each side; upper labials four on the left and five on the right side, with a partial suture in the elongate fifth labial, and a suggestion of one in the enlarged second labial on the left side, indicating that the normal labial formula may be 6–6; lower labials 8–8, the first pair broadly in contact behind the mental; a large pair of anterior chin-shields; posterior chin-shields scarcely differentiated from the gulars; dorsal scales in fifteen rows except on the neck, where there are twenty-one rows at the first ventral, dropping to fifteen at the ninth; ventral plates 240; anal divided; subcaudals 81, the last five, including the terminal one, entire.

General color black, the scales faintly and narrowly outlined with light.

Measurements.—Total length 278 mm., tail 49 mm.

Remarks.—This species is plainly the representative in southwestern Arabia of the Syrian *R. melanocephalus*. The very different shape of the frontal, with the combination of additional characters, appears to indicate that it is a fully distinct species. The distinctness of the genus *Rhynchocalamus* from the East Indian and Indian *Oligodon*, with which it was combined by Boulenger, has been maintained by Barbour (Proc. New England Zool. Club, **5**, p. 91, 1914). The genus is much more satisfactorily established by the discovery of a second species, which fails in any way to bridge the gap between *R. melanocephalus* and the Indian species of *Oligodon*, and is directly allied to the former.

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